

Message Text

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INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

USINT CAIRO

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AMEMBASSY JIDDA

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E.O. 11652: GDS

T GS: PFOR, IS, EG, XF

SUBJ: SHARON AND RABIN DISUCSS POSSIBLE SCENARIOS FOR
EGYPTIAN-ISRAELI*SET**EMENT

GENEVA FOR MEPC DEL

1. ARIK SHARON AND YITZHAK*RABIN,BOTH*FORMER GENERALS AND
BRAND-NEW KNESSET MEMBERS, APPEARING ON PRIME TIME TV
DISCU* ION PRO**AM JAN 21, OUTLINED4THEIR RESPECTIVE
VIEWS ON POSSIBLE SCENARIOS FOR DISPOSITION OF T*E SINAI
OVER 15-20 YEAR TIME FRAME. IN SOBER, LOW KEY APPROACH,
BOTH MEN AGREED THAT A) SETTLEMENT WITH EGYPT WAS KEY TO
SETTLEMENTS WITH OTHER ARAB STATES; B) DIPLOMATIC SETTLEMENT
HAD TO BE DISTINGUISHED FROM TRUE PEACE, AND THAT LATTER WOULD
REQUIRE DECADES; AND C) ISRAELI SECURITY INTERESTS HAD TO BE
PRESERVED UNTIL SUCH TIME AS "TRUE PEACE" ACHIEVED.

2. SHARON ARGUED THAT IDF MUST REMAIN IN SINAI UNTIL FINAL
PEACE AGREEMENT IS CONCLUDED, EVEN IF THIS TAKES 15-20
YEARS. DISENGAGEMENT AGREEMENT HAD INVOLVED SERIOUS MISTAKE
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OF RETURNING BEST STRATEGIC LINE, 8-10 KMS EAST OF CANAL, TO
EGYPTIANS. UNDER CIRCUMSTANCES, ISRAEL SHOULD NOT BUDGE

FROM NEW LINE AT JIDI AND MITLA PASSES FOR DURATION OF INTERIM PERIOD. TIMING OF EVENTUAL WITHDRAWAL WOULD BE CONDITIONED BY NATURE OF POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS, WITH ASSUMPTION THAT TANGIBLE POLITICAL IMPROVEMENTS COULD SHORTEN TRANSITION TIME. EGYPT WOULD BE "COMPENSATED" FOR ALLOWING CONTINUED IDF PRESENCE AT PASSES BY A) MATERIAL BENEFITS IT DERIVES FROM OPENING SUEZ CANAL; B) AUGMENTED PRESTIGE FROM ITS CONTROL OF EAST AND WEST BANKS OF CANAL; AND C) EGYPTIAN ADMINISTRATION OF SINAI PRECEDING ACTUAL RETURN OF AREA TO GOE SOVEREIGNTY.

3. RABIN POINTED OUT THAT SHARON'S PROPOSAL FOR CONTINUED IDF PRESENCE AT MITLA-JIDI PASSES FOR EXTENDED PERIOD OF TIME WOULD BE UNACCEPTABLE TO EGYPTIANS AND HENCE UNREALISTIC. KEY POINT WAS TO GET EGYPTIAN CONSENT TO A SETTLEMENT WHICH DID NOT UNDULY ENDANGER ISRAEL'S SECURITY. IN CONTEXT OF LIMITED OR OVERALL PEACE AGREEMENT, CALCULATED RISK HAD TO BE TAKEN. ADVANTAGE OF JAN 18 DISENGAGEMENT AGREEMENT WAS PREISELY THAT GOE HAD AGREED TO IT AND THAT GOI COULD STILL PRESERVE ITS SECURITY. IF ONE ACCEPTS ESSENTIALITY OF SUEZ CANAL TO EGYPT, EGYPTIAN MILITARY PRESENCE ON EAST BANK HAD TO BE ACCEPTED.

4. RABIN SAID THAT OVERALL EGYPTIAN-ISRAELI PEACE AGREEMENT MUST PROVIDE FOR DEMILITARIZATION OF SINAI TO BE SUPERVISED BY PARTIES, ISRAELI RETENTION OF LIMITED AREA ADJACENT TO OLD INTERNATIONAL BORDER AS WELL AS SHARM-EL-SHEIKH, AND IDF WITHDRAWAL FROM REST OF SINAI BY STAGES.

5. COMMENT: FOR MOMENT AT LEAST, SHARON RETAINS AURA OF WAR HERO TURNED POLITICAL LEADER, HAVING EMERGED FROM OCTOBER WAR WITH SAME CHARISMATIC PUBLIC IMAGE. HE IS ALSO CATALYST FOR CONTINUING PUBLIC CONTROVERSY OVER GOVERNMENT'S PREWAR AND WAR POLICIES, AND ISSUE OF RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ARMY LEADERSHIP AND POLITICS. LATEST DEVELOPMENTS HAVE BEEN A) FLAREUP OVER ALLEGED INTERVIEW IN HARPERS, WHICH SHARON DISCLAIMS WHILE NONETHELESS CONCURRING WITH CRITICAL VIEWS ATTRIBUTED TO HIM, AND B) CANCELLATION OF HIS RESERVE STATUS AS DIVISION COMMANDER WHICH HAS CHARACTERIZED AS A POLITIDALLY MOTIVATED ACT. SHARON WILL REMAIN IMPORTANT FIGURE IN ONGOING
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PUBLIC DEBATE ABOUT CONTOURS OF PEACE AGREEMENT WITH EGYPT AND OTHER ARAB STATES, AND HE WLL ALSO CONTRIBUTE TO ATMOSPHERE OF POLITICAL FERMENT IN KNESSET. IT IS UNLIKELY, AND WOULD BEOUT OF CHARACTER, FOR HIM TO PASSIVELY ACCEPT ROLE AS MEMBER OF OPPOSITION IN KNESSET.
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